

Roots & Wings!

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For Berkeley Chinese Community Church

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(delivered in English by Rev. Sharon Lee MacArthur, translated into Cantonese by Vivian Yee)

I Corinthians 13:4-8

⁴ Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant ⁵or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; ⁶it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. ⁷It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

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- Today is a special day when we honor mothers –
- Thank you to our Sunday School kids, youth and leaders for helping us to celebrate moms!
- And for our menfolk - your special day is next month when you are honored on Father's Day.
- And we do remember that it is often the father or the mother AND the father who nurtures and cares for the children during the growing up years.
- But today - we will focus on moms.
- our birth mothers wherever they are,
- the mothers around us today,
- those who "were there" for us as mothers to nurture and care for us when our own mothers could not or did not.
- Mothers are a special species!



- Did you know that there are more phone calls on Mother's Day than any other day of the year?



- Did you know that the busiest day of the year at car washes is the Saturday before Mother's Day?
- Moms are indeed special...



- But Mother's Day *sermons* are difficult to write deliver...
- my clergy friends warn one another not to get too sentimental about motherhood because.....
- for some, motherhood is an accident and not always welcome;
- for some, biological motherhood isn't possible;
- for some, our mothers weren't all that nice;
- for some motherhood under the very best of circumstances is a challenge.
- for some, mothers are not present,
- for some, children are no longer around to be mothers to.
- These are a lot of qualifications...why do we even bother with Mother's Day?
- Maybe it's because we know that in spite of the challenges, "motherhood" is a beautiful ideal,
- Motherhood is a natural part of God's creative plan to bring love and caring to light.
- Motherhood is a constant demand for the gift of love and caring.
- Being a mother is about nurturing and teaching and loving and caring for a child so he or she can authentically be in God's world...
- with or without the mother's physical presence.
- In other words – being a mom is partnering with God to grow a child in such a way that



strengthens roots & grows wings.

- We all have stories about roots – don't we?
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- Our roots can be in the cultural and ethnic roots of our family
- I have Chinese roots – like many of you...



- My mother came from China in the late 1930's
- She came with distinct traditions and practices...many that are different than mainstream America's.
- One day, I came home from school crying because classmates teased me about the black arm band pinned around my sleeve.
-

- I don't remember my mother's exact words - I was only 7.
- But it was something like - "We are Chinese, and when a father dies, his children must wear this black band everywhere as a sign of respect and mourning.
- This is something you must do because you are Chinese.
- When it is time to take it off - we will all do this together and celebrate his life."
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- There was no arguing with her!
- It was much easier to try to explain to my friends.
- I hoped they would understand
- and I hoped that they would share what customs and traditions they practiced when family members die.
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- It was an important lesson for me –
- We Chinese have our own ways of doing things just as others have their own ways.
- And that it's OK to do things differently; and to accept the differences.
- This is a lifelong lesson I practice in honor of my mother.
- Roots and wings in one small lesson of life...
- Along with all the other lessons I can still hear ringing in my ears:
- I'm not always going to be around – you'll have to remember what I teach you –
- if you use something, put it back
- always wear clean underwear because you never know when you'll be in an accident,
- don't talk back to your elders and so on...



- Funny thing – it's almost like a prayer that Jesus prays in John 17 –
- One that is known as his "farewell prayer" a public prayer - one that he hopes his followers would hear - really hear - especially this part....
- "And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you.
- Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one."
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- Doesn't it sound like Jesus is trying to drive the point home -
- I am no longer in the world, but **they - the followers**, are in the world - maybe they will hear his words in this way
- I'm not going to be with you, my followers,
- But you will stay - you will continue to live your lives in this world.
- But don't worry, because
- my Father, the God that you worship,
- will protect you in my name
- so that you - all of you and God may be one,
- just as God & I are one.
- Roots & wings all rolled into one...



- Consider this story of Leland Wang the Chinese Evangelist –
- In his words – he is Chinese by birth and a Christian by rebirth;
- a Chinese by race, and a Christian by grace.
- He shared about a time when he had been very naughty
- his mother had a stick in her hand and called him over to her to be punished.
- But he ran off, taunting his mother “You can’t catch me!”
- His mom had very little chance of catching her small, lively son.
- So she stood still and said, “I feel ashamed of myself that I have raised a boy who is not willing to be disciplined by his mother when he does wrong.
- I must punish myself,”
- And She began to whip her bare arm.
- This touched the child’s heart and he ran back to his mother
- he threw himself into her arms and pleaded with her not to hurt herself.
- “Punish me!” he cried.
- But no further punishment was necessary.
- As he grew older, Leland realized that the memory of this incident helped him to understand the great love of Jesus Christ who gave his life on the cross for LOVE.
- For Leland Wang - Roots and wings are in Christian Love
- It’s about LOVE, friends –
- The kind of love that is described in today’s passage:



- Patient & kind;
- not envious or boastful or arrogant⁵ or rude.
- Love –
- That does not insist on its own way;
- That’s not irritable or resentful;
- That’s doesn’t rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth.
- That bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things....even death!
- It seems to me that when one is rooted in *that* kind of love -
- the wings that grow can soar toward God in amazing, miraculous ways!
 - “I’m not always going to be around - just as I have loved you and taught you, you should be that way in the world...
 - remember to say please and thank you
 - if you open something, close it,
 - if you use something, put it back
 - It’s ok to wear a black band to mourn your father’s death

- and it's ok to express mourning in different ways;
- always wear clean underwear because you never know when you'll be in an accident,
- don't talk back to your elders..
- honor your fathers and your mothers who personify love and give you roots and wings...



- God of love, protect all your children in your name that they may ALL be one!" Just as Jesus prayed.
- And bless our mothers who helped to give us roots and wings.
- Amen!